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SUBJ: LAHORE IPR SEMINAR A SUCCESS

¶1. SUMMARY: Post and AmConsul Lahore organized a seminar on the relationship between intellectual property rights (IPR) and its role in Pakistan's economy at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry on May 13, 2008. The seminar brought together government officials, students, academics, trade associations and members of the private sector to exchange views on protection of intellectual property rights and its importance to Pakistan's economy. The seminar drew about 150 people. Participant feedback indicated that the seminar successfully presented the economic benefits that Pakistan could derive from greater intellectual property protection and also highlighted the challenges still remaining. End Summary.

¶2. Embassy Islamabad and AmConsul Lahore organized a seminar on the link between intellectual property rights (IPR) and the growth of Pakistan's domestic industries on May 13, 2008 at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry. EconCouns opened the seminar and IP Attache, AmEmbassy New Delhi, gave the inaugural address. Eleven other speakers also participated, representing both Pakistani government agencies and industry. Among the speakers were representatives from the Intellectual Property Organization, the Copyright Office, Customs, Federal Investigation Agency, the National Academy of Performing Arts and the judiciary as well as representatives from the legal profession, book publishing, and pharmaceutical industries. A representative from the International Federation of Phonographic Industry (IFPI) also spoke. Acting CG Lahore hosted a dinner in honor of the speakers.

¶3. Issues discussed included: economics of IPR, enforcement, government initiatives, copyright, and protection of Pakistan's cultural patrimony. The best speaker of the day was Arshad Mahmood, the Director of Programs at the National Academy of Performing Arts and a noted Pakistani composer and musician. Discarding his prepared remarks on the need for collection societies in Pakistan, he made an impassioned plea for greater IPR protection, arguing that everybody has a role to play in not stealing the creations of artists and innovators. Driving the point home, Mahmood remarked that he was unable to make money as an artist in Pakistan since his works are always pirated.

¶4. The event was well-attended by an audience made up of about 150 business, economics, and legal students, members of government agencies, academics, legal and business professionals over the course of the day. The seminar also generated substantial electronic and media coverage. Questions and debate were lively, including several questions on pricing structures as well as detailed questions on the enforcement process and its results. The focus remained primarily on Pakistan's industry and enforcement efforts and concerns that pharmaceutical, book, software and music pricing place legitimate goods out of the reach of the majority of Pakistanis. There were only one or two questions about Pakistan's elevation to priority watch list and whether IPR protection is solely for multinationals.

¶5. COMMENT: The seminar highlighted that piracy remains a serious problem in Pakistan and that there is still a lack of understanding

of IPR in the public. Post will continue to follow up on the issue.
End Comment.

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